



News from

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## **THE DREAM LIVES ON: Commemorating the Events of Bloody Sunday, 1965 and the Voting Rights Act**

By: Congressman Ron Kind

Forty years ago, events in Selma, Alabama, became a seminal moment for the advancement of civil rights in our country. Earlier this month, I had the privilege to join Representative John Lewis, one of the leaders of the non-violent civil rights movement, to retrace his steps across the Pettus Bridge where America's long march to freedom met a roadblock of violent resistance. The day became known as Bloody Sunday.

By 1965, the cause of equality and human dignity had already seen much triumph and tragedy: the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Ed.*, Rosa Parks' defiance on a bus in Montgomery, the breaking of the color barrier at Old Miss, the historic march on Washington, the assassinations of Edgar Evers and President Kennedy, the bombing deaths of four little girls at the 16th St. Baptist Church in Birmingham, the Mississippi Freedom Summer, the Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

But on this Bloody Sunday, about 600 people young and old put their lives on the line and met the unbridled force of racism for the most basic American right: the right to vote and be full participants in our Democracy. The Alabama State Patrol was waiting for them at the other side of the Pettus Bridge and attacked them with clubs, tear gas and dogs. John Lewis was beaten so badly he believed he was going to die. The images were captured on T.V. When the movie "Judgment at Nuremberg" was interrupted with the news, many people watching first thought it was a continuation of the movie depicting brutal Nazi oppression until they realized that this was happening in America, right at that very moment. Peoples' shock moved the political world.

Two weeks after Bloody Sunday, Dr. Martin Luther King and John Lewis led 4,000 people across the Pettus Bridge on their 54-mile march to Montgomery. Six months later, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, proclaiming that the right to vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison all people merely because they are different from each other.

Soon the Voting Rights Act will be up again for reauthorization. We should do it sooner rather than later. We should make it permanent, rather than for short periods so we don't have to revisit the issue and debate its provisions. Surely, there is enough common interest and bipartisan support to accomplish this.

Their cause 40 years ago must still be our cause to overcome today. As long as the power of America's diversity is diminished by acts of discrimination and violence against people just because they're black, Hispanic, Asian, Jewish, Muslim or gay, we still must overcome.

As long as the gap between rich and poor continues to spread, with some and not all having access to healthcare, we still must overcome.

As long as children of color are more likely to live in poverty, die sooner and less likely to graduate high school and go onto college, we still must overcome.

As long as the doors of economic opportunity are closed to those because of the color of their skin, rather than based on their ability, we still must overcome.

There is still much work to be done in our country. In the words of Martin Luther King: "Human progress never rolls on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God."

As long as we move forward as one Nation, united in these common goals, we can cross any bridge. And deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome.

We remember the events of 40 years ago, not only to honor the courage, sacrifice and accomplishments by those like John Lewis and so many more, but also to rededicate ourselves to their unfinished work: the pursuit of Justice, Love, Tolerance and Human Rights in our Country and throughout the World.